# VR Standards for Providers Chapter 20: Premiums

The following sections in the VR-SFP have been revised; these requirements will take effect on September 4, 2018.

## 20.6 Mileage Premium

This premium is for mileage reimbursement when the provider uses his or her own vehicle to travel to the customer’s location to provide services when another provider is not available within 50 miles of the customer’s location. This premium does not cover mileage reimbursement when other travel expenses will be reimbursed.

The Mileage Premium may be available to providers serving VR customers receiving the services in the following Standards for Providers (VR-SFP) manual chapters:

* Chapter 4: Employment Assessments
* Chapter 13: Work Readiness Services
* Chapter 14: Work Experience Services
* Chapter 17: Basic Employment Services
* Chapter 18: Supported Employment Services
* Chapter 19: Self Employment

### 20.6.1 Definitions

#### Fifty-Mile Radius

To determine whether the contracted provider is outside the 50-mile radius and eligible for a Mileage Premium, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff determines the distance from the provider's location to the location where the service will be provided using the route with the lowest mileage according to MapQuest.

The VR counselor must consult with the regional quality assurance specialist or the regional program support specialist to confirm that there is not another provider within a 50-mile radius of the customer's service location that can meet the customer’s needs.

#### Provider Location

The provider's location is defined as the provider's headquarters, as stated in the provider's contract, or the location of the provider's staff that is providing the service, whichever is closest to the location where the service will be provided.

For example, if the provider's headquarters is 75 miles one way from the location where the service will be provided, but the staff member providing the service is located (either his or her residence or a satellite location) 43 miles one way from where the service will be provided, then the provider is not eligible for a Mileage Premium. If the same provider's headquarters is 75 miles one way from where the service will be provided, but the staff member providing the service is located 100 miles one way from where the service will be provided, then the provider’s headquarters, as stated on the provider’s contract, will be used to calculate the mileage premium since this is the shortest distance.

#### Round Trip

A trip where the starting point and final destination are the same (for example, start and end at the provider’s location).

### 20.6.2 Service Description

The Mileage Premium may be available to providers serving VR customers:

* who require an eligible SFP service to achieve the long-term goals as identified on the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE);
* when there is not a qualified SFP provider available within a 50-mile radius of the location where the authorized service is to be provided; and
* who require the provision of a billable service, excluding travel for the sole purpose of obtaining a customer’s signature on required documents).

The Mileage Premium amount is based on direct, round-trip travel for each mile traveled over 50 miles. Travel within the customer's community while providing services to the customer is not allowed to be counted when the Mileage Premium payment is calculated. For example, no mileage is calculated when visiting businesses in the community to apply for jobs and/or visiting another customer in the same community VR only allows the provider to invoice for one round trip per day.

The VR program does not pay a Mileage Premium:

* to transport customers; or
* if the customer does not show up for a scheduled service (referred to as a "no show").

When a provider serves more than one customer within a round trip, the round-trip mileage is based on the travel to each customer’s location served during the round trip. (For example, travel is counted from the provider’s location to Odessa to Kermit to Pecos and back to the provider location. Travel within each of these towns would not count.)

Calculate Mileage Premium amount as follows:

1. Determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service location(s) using MapQuest Route Planner, with shortest distance and round-trip options selected;
2. Subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; then
3. Multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate.

The amount calculated is the Mileage Premium amount paid to the contracted provider if all other conditions are met and the premium is approved in advance with a service authorization. When multiple consumers are seen during a round trip, the cost of the Mileage Premium will be split between all customers.

All State of Texas travel rules for employees must be adhered to by providers.

If a Mileage Premium requirement is listed in the service description, in the process and procedure, or in the outcomes required for payment, need to be changed to meet the individualized needs of a customer a [DARS3472, Contracted Service Modification Request](http://www.texasworkforce.org/forms/DARS3472.docx) must be completed by the VR counselor and the modification must be approved by the state VR division director before travel.

### 20.6.3 Process and Procedures

The process and procedures are as follows:

* After the VR counselor and the regional quality assurance program specialist or regional program support specialist have determined there is not a provider to serve the customer within his or her local community, the provider receives a service authorization including the anticipated distance and number of trips to be traveled.
* Provider schedules the services with the customer and makes travel arrangements.
* Provider travels from the defined provider location to the location(s) of the service(s) and provides service(s) before returning to the provider location.
* Provider completes DARS3435, Mileage Premium Report.
* Provider obtains required signatures.
* Provider submits the required documentation for payment.
* VR staff reviews documentation, verifies mileage on MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance and round-trip options selected, and authorizes payment if all requirements are met.

### 20.6.4 Outcomes Required for Payment

The service provider is eligible for the Mileage Premium when:

* the customer is provided a billable service, excluding travel for the sole purpose of obtaining a customer’s signature on required documents;
* there is no provider for the service within a 50-mile radius of the customer's location, or the provider staff member within the 50-mile radius does not meet the qualifications necessary to provide the service; and
* all information required on DARS3435, Mileage Premium Report, is provided.

DARS3435, Mileage Premium Report, will include:

* the case ID for all customers served during the round trip;
* the purpose of the visit;
* the provider's location at which the mileage was initiated and completed;
* the mileage for each segment of the round-trip travel according to MapQuest’s shortest mileage and route settings, excluding mileage within the local community;
* the mileage calculation for the premium; and
* the required signatures.

Payment for the Mileage Premium is made when the VR counselor verifies the mileage for the trip and approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* DARS3435, Mileage Premium Report; and
* invoice.

### 20.6.5 Mileage Premium Fee

For more information, see 20.9.5 Mileage Premium.

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## 20.9 Premium Fee Chart

A provider cannot collect money from a VR customer or the customer's family for any service-related charge that exceeds VR's allowable service fees. If VR and another resource are paying for a service for a customer, the total payment must not exceed the fee specified in the VR Standards for Providers.

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### 20.9.5 Mileage Premium

Mileage is reimbursed based on the guideline in 20.6 Mileage Premium, at the approved state automobile mileage rate found on the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts webpage: https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/rates/current.php.



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### 20.9.7 Travel Premium

Mileage is reimbursed based on the guideline in 20.10.3.1 Mileage Only Reimbursement or 20.10.3.2 Mileage and Other Travel Cost Reimbursement, at the approved state automobile mileage rate found on the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts webpage: https://fmx.cpa.texas.gov/fmx/travel/textravel/rates/current.php

Reimbursement for the allowable expenses outlined on DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report, which are based on the guidelines found in section 20.10.3.2 Mileage and Other Travel Cost Reimbursement.

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## 20.10 Travel Premium

This Travel Premium allows contracted providers to be reimbursed for mileage and other travel-related costs, such as lodging, food, and third-party transportation. When only mileage travel is being submitted, manager approval is not required. For all other travel expenses, VR manager approval is required before the travel occurs.

The Travel Premium may be available to contracted providers serving VR customers who receive the services described in

* VR-SFP chapters:
  + Chapter 5: Orientation and Mobility Services
  + Chapter 7: Diabetes Self-Management Education Services
  + Chapter 9: Assistive Technology for Sight-Related Disabilities
  + Chapter 10: Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who Are Blind (IL-OIB)
* Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual (VRSM) B-403-3: Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System.

### 20.10.1 Definitions

#### Fifty-Mile Radius

To be eligible for the Travel Premium, the service being provided must be at least 50 miles from the contracted provider’s location. To determine whether the contracted provider is outside the 50-mile radius and eligible for a Mileage Premium, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff determines the distance from the provider's location to the location where the service will be provided using the route with the lowest mileage according to MapQuest.

The VR counselor must consult with the regional quality assurance specialist or the regional program support specialist to confirm that there is not another provider within a 50-mile radius of the customer's service location that can meet the customer’s needs.

#### Provider Location

The provider's location is defined as the provider's headquarters, as stated in the provider's contract, or the location of the provider's staff that is providing the service, whichever is closest to the location where the service will be provided.

For example, if the provider's headquarters is 75 miles one way from the location where the service will be provided, but the staff member providing the service is located (either his or her residence or a satellite location) 43 miles one way from where the service will be provided, then the provider is not eligible for a Mileage Premium. If the same provider's headquarters is 75 miles one way from where the service will be provided, but the staff member providing the service is located 100 miles one way from where the service will be provided, then the provider’s headquarters, as stated on the provider’s contract, will be used to calculate the mileage premium since this is the shortest distance.

#### Round Trip

A trip where the starting point and final destination are the same (for example, start and end at the provider’s location).

### 20.10.2 Service Description

The Travel Premium is based on round-trip travel and payment can include reimbursement of approved:

* lodging,
* per diem,
* airfare (if necessary),
* mileage when provider’s own vehicle is used, and
* transportation by taxi, bus, other form of mass transit, or network transportation driver (for example, Uber or Lyft).

The VR program does not reimburse for travel expenses

* to transport customers; or
* if the customer does not show up for a scheduled service (referred to as a "no show").

Providers do not qualify for a state tax exemption.

The Travel Premium may be available to contracted providers serving VR customers:

* who require an eligible SFP service to achieve the long-term goals as identified on the customer's individualized plan for employment (IPE) or independent living goals established under the (IL-OIB) program;
* when there is not a qualified SFP provider available within a 50-mile radius of the location where the authorized service is to be provided; and
* who require the provision of a billable service, excluding travel for the sole purpose of obtaining a customer’s signature on required documents).

A request to change a Travel Premium requirement listed in the Service Description, Process and Procedures, or Outcomes Required for Payment, must be documented and approved by the VR director using the DARS3472, Contracted Service Modification Request.

#### 20.10.2.1 Mileage Only

When considering the cost of personal vehicle travel (mileage) as a transportation alternative, the VR provider considers all related costs, such as the cost of meals, parking, vehicle rental, fuel, or taxi.

VR Manager approval is not required for the provider to be reimbursed for mileage only.

The mileage reimbursement is based on direct, round-trip travel for each mile traveled over 50 miles.

Before traveling, the provider must receive a service authorization from VR that includes the anticipated distance and the number of trips to be traveled.

After traveling, the provider must submit DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report with all sections related to the mileage reimbursement completed.

To calculate mileage-only amount of the Travel Premium:

1. Determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service location(s) (can include travel within the customer’s community) using MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance and round-trip options selected
2. Subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; and
3. Multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate

Example:

1. The provider is located in Lubbock.
2. The customer lives in Amarillo (126 miles from Lubbock).
3. The provider traveled a total of five (5) miles within Amarillo to provide services at several locations. (e.g. Walmart to United Grocery store for a total of 5 miles),
4. The provider returns to Lubbock (126 miles).
5. The mileage reimbursement is calculated as follows:

126 + 5 + 126 = 257

257 – 50 = 207 miles

207 x (state-approved mileage rate) will equal the mileage reimbursement.

For the latest travel rate, see the Transportation Allowance section of the [TWC Travel Guide](https://twc.texas.gov/files/partners/travel-guide-twc.pdf).

#### 20.10.2.2 Other Travel Cost (Excluding Mileage)

To be reimbursed for any other travel costs (excluding mileage) such as meals, lodging, and transportation, the provider must submit a DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report, which includes the projected cost of travel for each customer to be served during the trip. The VR counselor and VR Manager review the projected cost on the DARS3436 and supporting documentation. When the VR Manager approves projected cost of travel on the DARS3436, then a service authorization is issued to authorize travel cost. The service authorization must be issued before the travel occurs.

When applicable, the provider must use the guidelines below, , when completing the DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report.. Copies of all receipts for all costs, excluding mileage, must be submitted with the invoice.

##### Lodging

The cost of lodging is reimbursed only if it is incurred at a commercial lodging establishment.

The provider uses hotels that are listed in [Contract Hotel Directory Listings](https://portal.cpa.state.tx.us/hotel/hotel_directory/index.cfm) unless less expensive lodging is available than allowed as published in the US General Services Administration's (GSA) Federal [Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem). If the city is not listed but the county is listed, use the daily rate of the county.

##### Meals

Meals are only reimbursed if:

* the provider is away from the identified provider location for at least six consecutive hours, and
* overnight travel is required for the trip.

Receipts are required for meals to be reimbursed.

Gratuities are not reimbursed. Taxes are not reimbursed. Alcohol expenses are not reimbursed.

To determine the per diem rate, refer to the [Domestic Maximum Per Diem Rates](http://www.gsa.gov/perdiem) published by the GSA. If the appropriate city is not listed, but the county is listed, the VR counselor uses the daily rate for the county

##### Air Transportation

Airfare can be purchased to meet a provider's transportation needs only if:

* airfare is the most cost-effective method (flying versus driving);
* airfare is an appropriate means of transportation for the provider based on potential disability-related factors; or
* no reasonable alternative exists.

When considering the cost of airfare as a transportation alternative, the VR provider considers all related costs, such as the cost of transportation to and from the airport, parking, vehicle rental, fuel, or taxi. The VR provider documents the cost comparison clearly, including supporting documentation and submits this as an addendum to the DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan. A brief justification for the need for air transportation must be included on the DARS3436.

For a provider to be reimbursed for commercial air transportation expenses, a copy of a complete passenger receipt issued by a commercial airline company or an itinerary issued by the company or a travel agency is required.

The commercial air transportation expense receipt or itinerary must include the following:

* name of the provider and airline
* ticket number
* class of transportation
* travel dates
* amount of the airfare
* origin and destination of each flight
* proof of payment

The provider should select the most cost-effective airfare available between the airport closest to the identified provider location and the city where services will be provided.

##### Ground Transportation

A provider may be reimbursed for the actual cost of transportation by taxi, bus, other form of mass transit, form a network transportation driver (for example, Uber or Lyft), if needed for the provider to travel to the location where the service will be provided.

* The most cost-effective mode of transportation available must be used
* Receipts for all travel-related expenses must be provided.

### 20.10.3 Process and Procedures

After the VR counselor and regional quality assurance program specialist or regional program support specialist determines there is not a provider to serve the customer within his or her local community, the following process and procedures apply.

#### 20.10.3.1 Mileage Only Reimbursement

To be reimbursed for mileage only, the provider does the following:

* receives a service authorization including the anticipated distance and number of trips to be traveled;
* schedules the services with the customer(s);
* makes travel arrangements;
* travels from the defined provider location to the location(s) of the service;
* provides the service;
* returns to the defined provider location;
* completes all sections of the DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report that are related to mileage reimbursement;
* obtains required signatures; and
* submits the required documentation for payment.

To calculate mileage reimbursement, use the form and guidelines below:

1. determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service locations, including travel within the customer’s community, using MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance and round-trip options selected;
2. subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; then
3. multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate.

After the provider submits all required documentation for payment, a VR staff member:

* reviews the provider’s documentation,
* verifies mileage on MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance, and round-trip options selected, and
* authorizes payment if all requirements are met.

#### 20.10.3.2 Reimbursement of Mileage and Other Travel Costs

To be reimbursed for mileage **and** any other travel costs, such as the costs for meals, lodging, and transportation, the provider and VR staff does the following:

* Provider submits the projected cost on the DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report, to the VR counselor to gain preapproval for travel expenses.
* VR counselor reviews DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report and submits to the VR Manager for review.
* VR Manager approves or disapproves the projected cost by documenting the his or decision on the DARS3436.
* VR counselor issues service authorization or multi-customer service authorization (when multiple customers are to be seen in the round-trip travel) for the approved projected cost, after all appropriate approvals are in place and submits the service authorization to the provider. (The service authorization includes separate line items for each of the allowable expenses. The expenses will be split equally between all customers seen within the round-trip.)
* Provider schedules the services with the customer and makes travel arrangements.
* Provider travels from the defined provider location to the location(s) of the service, provides services before returning to the provider location.
* Provider completes all applicable sections of the DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report recording the actual cost.
* Provider obtains required signatures.
* Provider submits the required documentation for payment.

To calculate mileage reimbursement, use the form and guidelines below:

1. determine the round-trip mileage from the provider's location to the service locations, including travel within the customer’s community, using MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance and round-trip options selected;
2. subtract 50 miles from the round-trip total; then
3. multiply the total by the state-approved mileage rate.

When other travel cost such as meals, lodging and transportation are included on the DARS3436, the provider follows all guidelines in the service definitions on the form and submits copies of all receipts related to:

* lodging,
* meals,
* air transportation, and/or
* ground transportation.

After the provider submits all required documentation for payment, a VR staff member:

* reviews the provider’s documentation,
* verifies mileage on MapQuest Route Planner with shortest distance, and round-trip options selected (if any),
* verifies all actual travel expenses with receipts and any other required documentation,
* compares actual expense to the approved projected cost recorded on the DARS3436 to ensure expenses were allowed and
* authorizes payment if all conditions are met.

### 20.10.4. Outcomes Required for Payment

The service provider is eligible for the Travel Premium when:

* the customer(s) receives the provision of a billable service, excluding travel for the sole purpose of obtaining a customer’s signature on required documents
* there is no provider for the service within a 50-mile radius of the customer's location, or the staff of the provider within the 50-mile radius do not meet the qualifications necessary to provide the service; and
* all information required on DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report is provided.

The DARS3436 must include:

* case ID for all customers served during the round trip;
* purpose of the visit provided;
* provider's location at which travel was initiated and completed;
* all addresses traveled to during the round trip;
* For mileage reimbursement
  + each segment of the round-trip travel according to MapQuest shortest mileage and route settings; and
  + mileage calculation for the premium (Total mileage for the round trip, according to MapQuest shortest mileage and round-trip settings minus 50 miles)
* For other travel cost such as meals, lodging and transportation:
  + DARS3436 that includes the Management approval for the projected travel expenses;
  + DARS3436 that records the actual expenses, following all requirements in the services definition, for the round-trip travel
  + copies of receipts and supporting documentation for all expenses.
* Required signatures

The VR program does not reimburse for travel expenses

* to transport customers; or
* if the customer does not show up for a scheduled service (referred to as a "no show").

Providers may not be paid when customers do not show up for scheduled service.

The Travel Premium is paid when the VR counselor verifies the travel reimbursement and approves a complete, accurate, signed, and dated:

* DARS3436, Travel Premium Travel Plan and Report;
* required supporting documents, such as receipts; and
* invoice.

### 20.10.5 Travel Premium Fee

For more information, see 20.9.7 Travel Premium.